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## Before Beachie Creek

Raine Welterlen  
*Portland State University*

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## **Before Beachie Creek:**

An account of the biodiversity observed on a hiking trip in July 2020, three months before devastating wildfires destroyed much of the

## **Opal Creek Wilderness**

**By Raine Welterlen**





# Raven

*corvus corax*

## Description:

Ravens average at a four-foot wingspan.

They have a large slightly curved bill, plumage is an iridescent black and the irises are a dark brown.

Their long graduated tail distinguishes them from crows as well as their mane-like throat feathers.

Live in most northern parts of the world preferring wooded areas with large expanses of open land.

Omnivorous, consuming anything from carrion, insects, cereal grains, berries, to food waste.

Ravens have a upwards of thirty different types of vocalizations including their deep sonorous croak. Quarrelsome but devoted to their families. Young birds may travel in flocks but later mate for life with each pair defending their own territory. Aerial acrobatics, demonstrations of intelligence, and ability to provide food are key behaviors in courting.

Ravens are one of four animals known to have displacement.

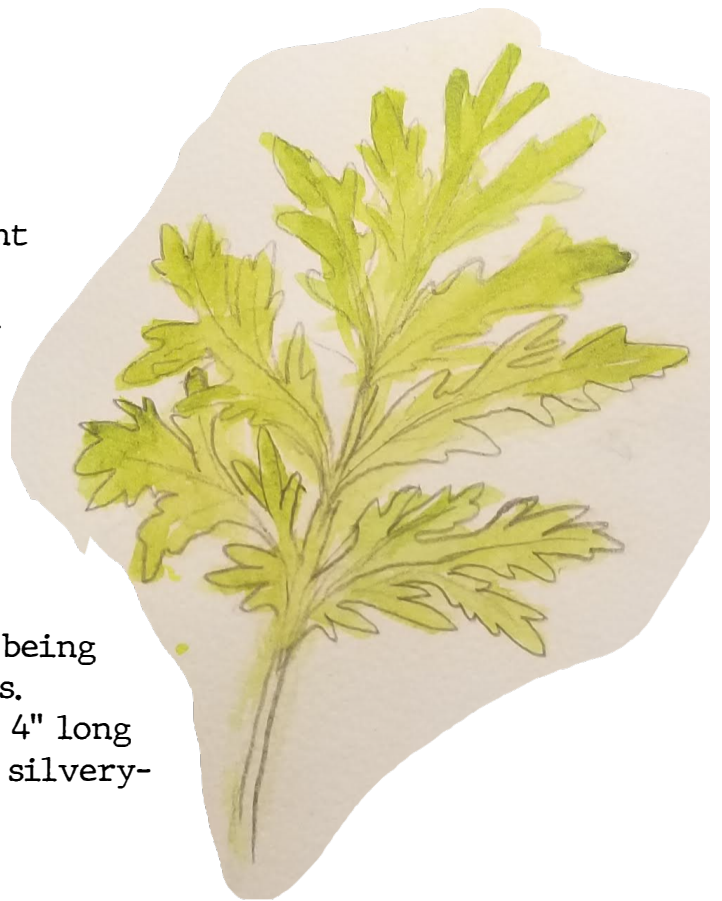


# Wormwood

*Artemisia absinthium*

Wormwood is an herbaceous perennial plant with fibrous roots native to temperate Eurasia and Northern Africa but has been naturalized in Canada and the Northern United States.

2 to 4 foot straight grooved branched with silvery-green stems. Leaves are spirally arranged and have a greenish grey coloring above and white below. Leaves can grow to almost 10" long being bipinnate or tripinnate on its long stalks. Younger leaves are usually between 2 and 4" long and with shorter stalks. Covered in silky silvery-white hairs and have oil-bearing glands



They bloom from early summer to early autumn. Flowers are pale yellow, tubular and clustered in spherical bent-down heads. They are anemophilous their pollen spread by the wind. Grows on uncultivated arid ground and rocky slopes at the edge of footpaths and fields.

Has a very bitter flavor that is used to flavor absinthe and other alcoholic beverages, though high consumption can cause convulsions.

Used in medicine to help with indigestion, and other problems with the digestive tract.





# Banana Slug

*Ariolimax Columbianus*

This species of Banana Slug are often bright yellow, which is where they get their name, but they can also appear greenish, brown, tan or white.

Looking for their smooth mantle, foot fringe, and a prominent pneumostome on its right side, which is the entrance to their single lung, can help with identification.

Will grow up to 9.8" long in its 7-year lifespan. Its two eyestalks, which are really no more than tentacles, are retractable and can be regrown if bitten off.

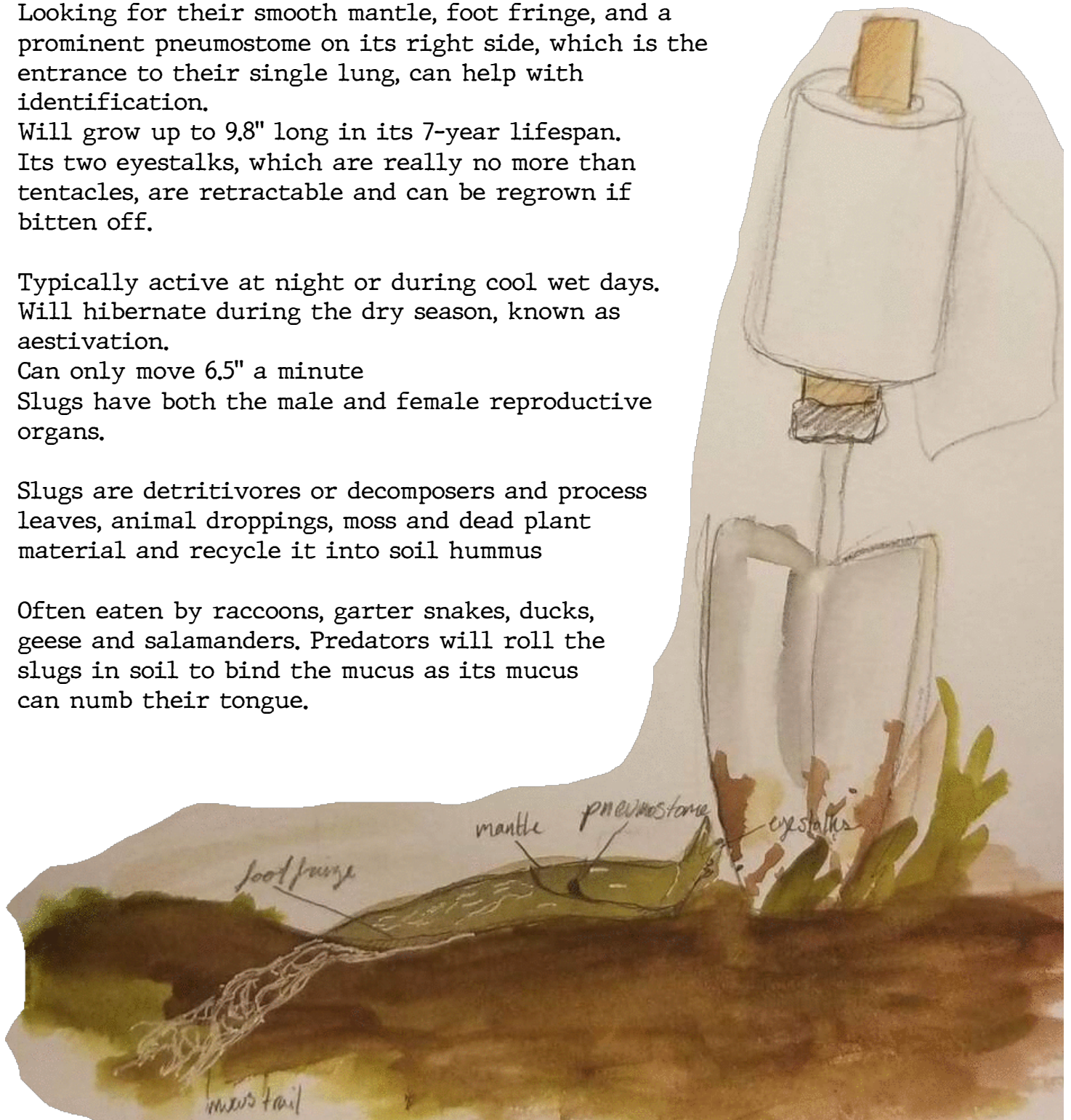
Typically active at night or during cool wet days. Will hibernate during the dry season, known as aestivation.

Can only move 6.5" a minute

Slugs have both the male and female reproductive organs.

Slugs are detritivores or decomposers and process leaves, animal droppings, moss and dead plant material and recycle it into soil hummus

Often eaten by raccoons, garter snakes, ducks, geese and salamanders. Predators will roll the slugs in soil to bind the mucus as its mucus can numb their tongue.



# Western Red Cedar

*thuja plicata*

Evergreen coniferous tree in the cypress family, it is not a true cedar of the genus *Cedrus*. Often found alongside the Douglas fir and Western Hemlock.

Can grow in forested swamps and under dense shade. Some specimens have been 210-230 ft. tall with a 10-23 ft. diameter trunk.

Oldest verified specimen of the western red cedar was 1460 years old

Flat sprays with scale like leaves in opposite pairs

Two Types of cones...

Pollen cones are red or purple at first and shed yellow pollen in spring.

Seed cones are brown and thicker than the pollen cones. Each seed has a papery wing down each side.

Valued as timber for its straight grain, few knots, and natural resistance to

decay.





# Aquatic Pacific Giant Salamander

*Dicamptodon tenebrosus*

Endemic to Pacific Northwest

Can grow up to a foot long

Larvae are aquatic with external gills

They have long laterally compressed tails

Can mature into adulthood in the aquatic form of the larvae or develop into the terrestrial form, which is brown with black marbling.

Larvae form similar to Cope's Giant Salamander, which rarely develops into the terrestrial adult form.



You can tell them apart by the pacific salamander's wide protruding eyes, costal grooves, thick arms and darker coloring...

...where Cope's has a more golden coloring, no visible costal grooves, and only grows to be 8" long.

Cope's salamanders are also limited to The Clatsop and Mount Hood Forests, and can't migrate past the Lower White River Wilderness.

Prefer Cold mountain streams and ponds next to forests.

They hide under rocks during the day and come out at night.



When startled, Pacific Giant Salamanders can respond with a croaky-cry similar to a barking dog.





# History of Opal Creek

1850 -1869 Gold found in Opal Creek

1848 - Oregon becomes the 33<sup>rd</sup> State in the Union

1929-1934 - Jawbone flats developed

1964 - Oregon Wilderness Act does not include Opal Wilderness

1969 - George Atiyeh becomes caretaker of Jawbone flats

1972 - George Atiyah forms Shiny Rocks Mining Co. to block forest service plans

1976 - "The Hidden Wilderness: A Hikers Guide" Published

1981 - Boundary markers placed for Opal Creek Timber Sale

1981- Two different appeals made against the sale, both denied.

1984 - Oregon Wilderness Act does not include Opal Wilderness

1988 - George Atiyeh builds public trail into Opal Creek

1989 - "Easter Massacre" where protesters against the North Roaring Devil

Timber Sale were arrested after chaining themselves to trees

1989 - Friends of Opal Creek established to promote protection of Opal Creek

1989 - "Ancient Forests: Rage Over Trees" is Broadcast

1993 - Time magazine article "The Showdown at opal creek: The Battle for


America's Last Wilderness" by David Seideman is published

1994 - Opal Creek Forest Preserve Act & Northwest Forest Plan

1996 - Opal Creek Wilderness and Scenic Recreation Area Becomes a State Park

2005 - Friends of Opal Creek Becomes Opal Creek Ancient Forest Center

George Atiyeh Died in the Beachie Creek Fire in 2020







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